



December 15, 2005 — DRAFT

Proposed 2005 HECB Legislative Priorities

Background

The 2006 legislative session will begin on Monday, January 9, following an interim period in which Governor Gregoire commenced a major new education study, Washington Learns, and Republican legislators selected new minority leaders in both the Senate and the House of Representatives. Sen. Mike Hewitt of Walla Walla was elected Senate minority leader by his GOP peers, and Rep. Richard DeBolt of Centralia was chosen as House minority leader. Democrats retain the 26-23 majority in the Senate and the 55-43 majority in the House that they gained in the 2004 elections. The 2006 regular session will last a maximum of 60 days.

The legislative priorities identified in this document reflect several recent decisions by the HECB:

- At its September meeting, the board adopted the agency's 2006 supplement budget request to the governor and legislature, which included several enhancements designed to continue the board's implementation of the 2004 Strategic Master Plan for Higher Education;
- In October, the board adopted the Statewide and Regional Needs Assessment, which reaffirmed the state's continuing need to expand higher education programs and to improve student access to higher education in several regions of the state; and
- In November, the board's fiscal committee approved supplemental operating and capital budget recommendations to the full board. The operating budget recommendation (see Tab 9) calls for a 1.4-percent increase in the state's overall higher education budget. The board will act upon this recommendation at its December meeting.

Board action requested

At its December 15 meeting the board will be asked to approve the recommended legislative priorities as described in the following sections. This statement will be revised, if necessary, based on the board's action on the fiscal committee's budget recommendations, and any other changes identified during the board discussion.

The Highest Priority: Master Plan Implementation

All of the board's legislative priorities directly support the goals of the 2004 master plan, which are to (1) increase the number of students who earn college degrees and training credentials; and (2) improve the responsiveness of the state higher education system to the state's economic development needs. The following priorities are displayed within the relevant master plan policy initiatives.

Allocating student enrollments to support increased degree production:

- The board supports the State Board for Community and Technical Colleges (SBCTC) request for funding for 120 full-time student enrollments (FTE) at community and technical colleges for baccalaureate programs delivered through contracts between individual two-year and four-year institutions.
- The board recommends funding for 100 FTE at three of the research university branch campuses – 50 FTE at WSU Vancouver, 25 FTE at UW Tacoma, and 25 FTE at UW Bothell. This represents a modest increase to support expansion of the branch campuses, consistent with the direction taken in the original 2005-07 budget.

Increasing the Number of Degrees in High-demand Fields

- The board proposes funding for 600 FTE to resume the competitive grant process through which four-year institutions can expand enrollments and start new programs in high-demand fields, such as computer science, health care, and math-science teacher education. The HECB would award grants for programs in which there is unmet student enrollment demand and a shortage of skilled graduates for jobs in Washington state.
- The board supports the SBCTC request for planning funds to lay the groundwork for development of applied baccalaureate degree programs at selected community and technical colleges on a pilot basis.

Promoting Opportunity Through Student Financial Assistance

- The board has requested funds for its GEAR UP program, to meet scholarship obligations to students who participated in the program during the state's first six-year grant period.
- The board recommends expansion of the Future Teachers Conditional Scholarship and Loan Repayment Program, in line with efforts by legislators, the Washington Learns steering committee, and others, to increase the number of students who become K-12 teachers in subject matter or geographic shortage areas.

Helping more students earn bachelor's degrees

- The board recommends legislative action to provide state funds that were reduced when the public colleges and universities were given authority to increase tuition in the original 2005-07 state operating budget. These funds, which total approximately \$8.3 million, should be used for projects to improve student retention and graduation rates.
- The HECB has requested funding in its agency budget to enable development of an online student advising system that would enable transfer students to easily get information about the degree requirements at the state's public college and universities. The system also would allow students to compare requirements among several schools.

Reducing Barriers for Non-traditional Students

- The board supports efforts by the Workforce Training and Education Coordinating Board and the state's private career colleges to improve oversight of the for-profit job training institutions in the wake of the sudden closure earlier this year of the BCTI career college.

Improved Data and Greater Accountability

- The HECB has requested funds for a student-focused data system that would increase and improve the consistency of student-related data, allowing researchers to better analyze higher education and policy issues. Funding also would enable the board to coordinate its efforts with those of other organizations, including the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction, to develop a statewide, integrated K-16 data system.

RESOLUTION NO. 05-21

WHEREAS, Washington state law directs the Higher Education Coordinating Board to review, evaluate and make recommendations to the legislature and governor regarding budget, policy, and legislative issues in consultation with the state's other educational institutions; and

WHEREAS, The board has reviewed the budget proposals of the state's system of community and technical colleges and the public baccalaureate college and universities; and

WHEREAS, In order to fulfill its statutory responsibilities, the board has reviewed a number of legislative issues that are expected to arise during the 2006 session;

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, That the Higher Education Coordinating Board adopts its 2006 legislative agenda, whose priorities are described in Tab 4 accompanying this resolution;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, That the staff is directed to finalize the draft legislative priorities document in Tab 4 to reflect the board's discussion on December 15, 2005.

Adopted:

December 15, 2005

Attest:

Bob Craves, Chair

Jesus Hernandez, Secretary